

**Statement for the Record
Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
H R. 1897 – Vietnam Human Right Act
Wednesday, July 31, 2013**

Mr. Speaker, I fully support HR 1897 – the Vietnam Human Rights Act and I thank my distinguished colleague from the Foreign Affairs Committee and champion of human rights – Chris Smith for bringing this legislation forward and I am happy to cosponsor this bill.

We all want to see a prosperous, democratic and free Vietnam under which all people enjoy equal opportunities and fundamental freedoms.

This bill prohibits U.S. non-humanitarian assistance to the government of Vietnam unless the President certifies to Congress that Vietnam has made substantial progress respecting political, media, and religious freedoms, minority rights, access to U.S. refugee programs, and actions to end trafficking in persons and the release of political prisoners.

I continue to be concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Vietnam. The United States should stop sending American taxpayer money to governments that deny its citizens even the most basic human rights. Instead, we should leverage our assistance to push these governments into implementing democratic reforms, improving their human rights practices and allowing their citizens their fundamental rights, and that is what this bill will do.

My husband Dexter is a Vietnam combat veteran and former Army Ranger who was wounded defending the ideals of freedom and democracy – not just for Americans, but for all those who seek them. As the leading nation of the free world, the United States must stand with the Vietnamese people who are being brutally oppressed by their authoritarian government so that they may all live in a free and democratic country.